

MASCHIL OF ETHAN, A MAJESTIC SONG NO. 1565

A SERMON
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“I will sing of the mercies of the Lord forever: with my mouth will I make known Your faithfulness to all generations. For I have said, Mercy shall be built up forever: Your faithfulness shall You establish in the very heavens.”
Psalm 89:1, 2.

THIS Psalm is one of the very choicest songs in the night. Midst a stream of troubled thoughts there stands a fair island of rescue and redemption which supplies standing room for wonder and worship while the music of the words, like the murmuring of a river, sounds sweetly in our ears! Read the Psalm carefully, and it will awaken your sympathy, for he who wrote it was bearing bitter reproach, and was almost broken-hearted by the grievous calamities of his nation. Yet his faith was strong in the faithfulness of God, and so he sang of the stability of the divine covenant when the outlook of circumstances was dark and cheerless. Nor did he ever sing more sweetly than he sang in that night of his sorrow. Greatly does it glorify God for us to sing His high praises in storms of adversity, and on beds of affliction. It magnifies His mercy if we can bless and adore Him when He *takes*, as well as when He *gives*! It is good that out of the very mouth of the burning furnace there should come a yet more burning note of grateful praise! I am told that there is a great deal of relief to sorrow in complaining—that the utterance of our murmurs may, sometimes, tend to relieve our pain or sorrow. I suppose it is so. Certainly it is a good thing to *weep*, for I have heard it from the mouth of many witnesses. Most of us have felt that there are griefs too deep for tears, and that a flood of tears proves that the sorrow has begun to abate. But I think the best relief for sorrow is to sing—this man tried it, at any rate. When mercy seems to have departed, it is well to sing of departed mercy! When no present blessing appears, it is a present blessing to remember the blessing of the years gone by, and to rehearse the praises of God for all His *former* mercies towards us. Two sorts of songs we ought to keep up even if the present appears to yield us no theme for sonnets—the song of the past for what God has done, and the song of the future for the grace we have not yet tasted—the covenant blessings held in the pierced hand, safe and sure against the time to come!

Brothers and sisters, I want you, at this time, to feel the spirit of gratitude within your hearts. Though your mind should be heavy, your countenance sad, and your circumstances gloomy—still let the generous impulse kindle and glow. Oh, come, let us sing unto the Lord! It does not seem to me to be much for us to sing God’s praises in fair weather. The shouts of, “Harvest home,” over the loaded wagons are proper, but they are only natural. Who would not sing, then? What bird in all the country is silent when the sun is rising, and the dews of spring are sparkling? But the choicest choir charms the stars of night, and no note is sweeter, even to the human ear, than that which comes from the bare bough amidst the abundant snows of dark winter! O sons of sorrow, your hearts are tuned to notes which the joyful cannot reach! Yours is the full compass and swell. You are harps upon which the chief player on stringed instruments can display His matchless skill to a larger degree than upon the less afflicted. I pray He may do so now, by leading you to be first in the song. We must, all of us, follow, but some of us will not readily yield to be outstripped in this holy exercise. Like Elijah, we will try to run before the king’s chariot in this matter of praise! Accounting ourselves the greatest debtors of all to the grace and mercy of God, we must and will sing loudest of the crowd and make even—

*“Heaven’s resounding arches ring
With shouts of sovereign grace.”*

I invite your attention to two things. First, we shall look at the work of the eternal builder—“Mercy shall be built up forever.” Then, secondly, we shall listen to the resolve of an everlasting singer—“I will sing of the mercies of the Lord forever.”

I take the second verse first—it is necessary for the handling of our subject. You know, in the book of common prayer, the rubric prescribes concerning a certain form of words that it is, “to be said or sung.” We will do both. The first part we will have is the verse which begins, “I have said.” And then the second part shall be the verse which begins, “I will sing.” It shall be said and sung, too! God grant we may say it in the depth of our heart, and afterwards that our mouth may sing it, and make it known unto all generations! May the Spirit of all grace fill us with His own power!

I. First, then, let us contemplate THE ETERNAL BUILDER, AND HIS WONDERFUL WORK. “I have said, Mercy shall be built up forever: Your faithfulness shall You establish in the very heavens.”

I can see a vast mass of ruins. heaps upon heaps they lie around me. A stately edifice has tottered to the ground! Some terrible disaster has occurred. There it lies—cornice, pillar, pinnacle—everything of ornament, and of utility broken, scattered, dislocated. The world is strewn with the debris. Journey where you will, the desolation is before your eyes. Who has done this? Who has cast down this temple? What hand has ruined this magnificent structure? Manhood! Manhood it is which has been destroyed, and Sin was the agent that effected the Fall. It is man broken by his sin—iniquity has done it! O you devastator, what destructions have you worked in the earth! What desolation you have made unto the ends of the world! Everywhere is ruin! Everywhere is ruin! Futile attempts are made to rebuild this temple upon its own heap, and the Babel towers arise out of the rubbish and abide, for a season, but they are soon broken down, and the mountain of decay and corruption becomes even more hopeless of restoration! All that man has done with his greatest effort is but to make a huge display of his total failure to recover his position, to realize his pretentious plans, or to restore his own fleeting memories of better things. They may build, and they may pile up stone upon stone, and cement them together with untempered mortar, but their rude structure shall all crumble to the dust, again, for the first ruin will be perpetuated even to the last! So must it be, for sin destroys all. I am vexed in my spirit, and sorely troubled as I look at these ruins—fit habitations for owls and the dragon, the mole and the bat. Alas for manhood, that it should be thus fallen and destroyed!

But what else do I see? I behold the great original Builder coming forth from the ivory palaces to undo this mischief. He comes not with implements of *destruction*, so that He may cast down and destroy every vestige, but I see Him advancing with plummet and line, that He may raise, set up, and establish, on the sure foundation, a noble pile that shall not crumble with time, but endure throughout all ages! He comes forth with mercy. So “I said” as I saw the vision,” Mercy shall be built up forever.” There was no material but mercy with which a temple could be constructed among men. What can meet the guilt of human crimes but mercy? What can redress the misery occasioned by wanton transgression but mercy? Mere kindness could not do it. Power alone—even Omnipotence—could not accomplish it. Wisdom could not even commence until Mercy stood at her right hand. But when I saw Mercy interpose, I understood the meaning. Something was to be done that would change the dreary picture that made my heart groan, for at the advent of Mercy the walls would soon rise until the roof ascended high, and the palace received within its renovated glory the sublime architect who built it! I knew that now there would be songs instead of sighs since God had come and come in mercy! Beloved brothers and sisters, blessed was that day when Mercy, the Benjamin of God, His last-born attribute, appeared! Surely it was the son of our sorrow, but it was the son of His right hand. There had been no need of mercy if it had not been for our sin—thus from direst evil the Lord took occasion to display the greatest good!

When Mercy came—God’s darling, for He says He delights in mercy—then was there hope that the ruins of the Fall would no longer be the perpetual misery of men! I said, “Mercy shall be built up.” Now, if you closely scan the passage, you will clearly perceive that the psalmist has the idea of God’s mercy being manifest in building because a great breach has to be *repaired*, and the ruins of mankind are to be restored. As for building, it is a very substantial operation. A building is something which is palpable and tangible to our senses. We may have plans and schemes which are only visionary, but when it comes to building, as those know who have to build, there is something *real* being done, something more than surveying the ground, and drawing the model. And oh, what real work God has done for men! What real work in the gift of His dear Son! The product of His infinite purpose now becomes evident. He is working out His great designs after the counsel of His own will! What real work there is in the regeneration of His people! That is no fiction! Mercy is built, and the blessings that you and I have received have not mocked us—they have not been the dream of fanatics nor the fancy of enthusiasts. God has done real work for you and for

me, as we can bear testimony, and as we do bear testimony at this hour. “For I have said, Mercy shall be built.” That is no sham, no dream! It is the act and deed of God! Mercy *has* been built. A thing that is built is a fixed thing. It exists—really exists and exists according to a substantial plan. It is presumed to be permanent. True, all earthly structures will mold and decay, and man’s buildings will dissolve in the last great fire, but still, a building is more durable than a tent, or a temporary lodge in a garden of cucumbers, and “I have said, Mercy shall be built.” It is not a movable berth, but a fixed habitation—I have found it so. And have not you? God’s mercy began with some of you—no, I must not talk about when it began—I mean you began to *perceive* it many years ago. Now, when these heads that are now bald or gray had bushy locks, black as a raven’s—when you were curly-headed boys and girls that clambered on your father’s knee—you remember, even then, the mercy of your God, and it has continued with you! It is a fixed, substantial, real thing. Not the old house at home has been more fixed than the mercy of God! There has been a warm place for you by the fireside from your childhood until now, and a mother’s love has not failed. The mercy of God to you has been more substantial than a house has ever been. You can endorse the declaration of David—“I have said, Mercy shall be built.”

A building is an orderly thing as well as a fixed thing. There is a scheme and design about it. Mercy shall be built. God has gone about blessing us with designs that only His own infinite perfections could have completed. We have not seen the design, yet, in the full proportion. We shall be lost in wonder, love, and praise when we see it all carried out, but we already perceive some lines, some distinct traces of a grand design as we caught first one thought of God, and then another, of His mercy toward us. Mercy shall be built. I see that it shall. This is no load of bricks. It is polished stones built one upon another! God’s grace and goodness toward us have not come by chance, or as the blind distribution of a God who gave to all alike, and for none with any special purpose. No, but there has been as much a specialty of purpose to me as if I were the only one He loved, though, praised be His name, He has blessed, and is blessing multitudes of others beside me! As I discovered that in all His dealings of mercy there was a plan, I said, “Mercy shall be built” and so it has been. Yes, more! If I had the time I would like to picture to you the digging out of that foundation of mercy in the olden times—the marking out of the lines of mercy in the predestinating purpose. and the ancient covenant of God. Then I would appeal to your experience, and entreat you to observe how progressively, line upon line, the many promises have been verified to you up till now. With what transport you would say, “Yes, the figure may run, if it likes, on all fours! Yes, and may go on as many legs as a centipede, and yet there shall be no spoiling of it, the metaphor is so good! Mercy has been in course of construction, and is now being raised.” So the song begins, “Mercy shall be built.”

But now he says, “Mercy shall be built up.” Will you try to think, for a minute, upon these words—“built up”? It is not merely a long, low wall of mercy that is formed to make an enclosure or to define a boundary—it is a magnificent pile of mercy whose lofty heights shall draw admiring gazes that is being built up! God puts mercy on top of mercy, and He gives us one favor that we may be ready to receive another! There are some covenant blessings that you and I are not ready to receive yet. They would not be suitable to our present circumstances. “I have many things to say unto you, but you cannot bear them now.” Weak eyes that are gradually recovering their use must not have too much light. A man half-starved must not be fed at once upon substantial meat—he must have the nutrient gently administered to him. An excess of rain might inundate the land, and wash up the plants, while gentle showers would refresh the thirsty soil, and invigorate the herbs and the trees. Even so, mercy is bestowed upon us in measure. God does not give us every spiritual blessing at once. There are the blessings of our childhood in grace which we, perhaps, shall not so much enjoy when we come to be strong men. But then the blessings of the strong man, and of the father would crush the child and God abounds toward us in all wisdom and prudence in the distribution of His gifts. And, as I thought of that, I said, “Yes, mercy shall be built up. There shall be one mercy on another.”

Would that I had a vivid imagination and a tongue gifted with eloquence—then I would try to portray the 12 courses of the new Jerusalem, and show how the stones of fair colors are set, one next to the other, so that the colors set each other off, and blend into a wondrous harmony! But I can clearly see that the mercy of the azure shall not come first. There shall be the mercy of the emerald to underlie it, and there shall be an advance made in the preciousness of the stones with which God shall build us up, and we cannot tell what the next is to be—certainly not what the next after that is to be, nor the next after that, and the

one to follow after that! But as I saw half-a-dozen of the courses of God's mercy, I said, "His mercy shall be built up." I can see it rising, tier on tier, and course on course, and it gathers wonders. The longer I gaze, the more I am lost in contemplation. Silent with astonishment, spell-bound with the fascinating vision, I think, I believe, I know that—"Mercy shall be built up." Moreover, my expectations are awakened. I am waiting eagerly for the next scene. The designs of mercy are not exhausted. The deeds of mercy are not all told. The display of mercy must reach higher than has ever yet dawned upon my imagination. Its foundations were laid low. In great mercy He gave me a broken heart. That was pure mercy, for God accepts broken hearts—they are very precious in His sight. But it was a higher mercy when He gave me a new heart which was bound up and united in His fear, and filled with His joy! Oh, brothers and sisters, let us remember how He showed us the evil of sin, and caused us to feel a sense of shame! That was a choice mercy, but it was a clearer mercy when He gave us a sense of pardon. Oh, it was a blessed day when He gave us the little faith that tremblingly touched His garment's hem! It was better when He gave us faith as small as a grain of mustard seed that grew. It has been better, still, when, by faith, we have been able to do many mighty works for Him. We do not know what we shall do when He gives us more faith! Far less can we imagine how our powers shall develop in heaven, where faith will come to its full perfection! It will not die, as some idly pretend. There we shall implicitly believe in God. With the place of His throne as the point of our survey, we shall see nothing but His sovereign will to shape events—so with joyful assurance of hope we shall look onward to the advent of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the glory that is to follow. We shall sit in heaven and sing that the Lord reigns! We shall gaze upon the earth, and behold how it trembles at the coming of the King of kings! And with radiant faces we shall smile at Satan's rage! We do not know what any one of our graces may be built up into, but if you are conscious of any growth in any grace, you have learned enough to appreciate the oracle that speaks in this wise—"I have said, Mercy shall be built up forever."

Once again would I read this verse with very great emphasis, and ask you to notice how it rebukes the proud and the haughty, and how it encourages the meek and lowly in spirit. "I have said, Mercy shall be built up forever." In the edification of the saints there is nothing but mercy! Some people seem to fancy that when we get to a certain point in grace we do not need to plead for mercy. My dear friends, if any of you get into that humor that you say, "I need not make any confession of sin. I need not ask pardon of sin," you are trifling with the very truths of God of which you think you are the most strong in! I do not care what doctrine it is that brings you there, you are in a dangerous state if you stop there. Get away from there quickly! Your right position is at the throne of grace, and the throne of grace is meant for people that need grace—and you need grace now! Perhaps never more than now. Without new mercies every morning, as the manna that fed the Israelites of old, your days will be full of misery. Your Lord and Master taught you to say not only, "Our Father which are in heaven," and, "Your kingdom come," but He bade you constantly to pray, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us." "I have no trespasses," one says. Brother, go home and look at your heart. I will have no argument with you. Take the bandage off your eyes. You are about as full of sin as an egg is full of meat. Among the rest of your many sins there is this rotten egg of an accursed *pride* as to your own state of heart! I said, no matter what you say, "Mercy shall be built up *forever*." I expect God to deal with me on the footing of mercy as long as I live. I do not expect that He shall build me up in any way but according to His grace, and pity, and forgiving love. If there are any creatures in this world that can boast of having got beyond the need of asking for mercy, I have not learned their secret of self-deception! I know of some professors who climb so high up the ladder that they come down the other side. I fancy that is very much like the wonderful growing in perfection of which they boast about! It means full often going up so high that they are pure saints in their own esteem, but soon they have gone down so low that they are poor lost sheep in the estimation of the churches of Christ! God grant you may not fall by any such process.

"I have said, Mercy shall be built up forever." Brothers and sisters, if you and I ever get to the gate of heaven, and stand upon the alabaster doorstep with our finger on the glittering latch—unless the mercy of God carries us over the threshold, we shall be dragged down to hell even from the gates of heaven! Mercy, mercy, mercy! His mercy endures forever because we always need it! As long as we are in this world we shall have to make our appeal to mercy, and cry, "Father, I have sinned. Blot out my transgressions!" Well, that is, as I have said, what the text declares, "I have said, Mercy shall be built up," nothing else but

mercy. There will not come a point when the angelic masons shall stop and say, “Now then, the next course is to be *merit*. So far it has been mercy—but now the next course is to be perfection in the flesh—that course has no need of mercy.” No, no! Mercy, mercy, mercy till the very top stone shall be brought forth with shouts of, “grace, grace unto it.” “Mercy shall be built up.”

Yet glance your eyes onward. “I said, mercy shall be built up forever.” *Forever*? Well, I have been peering back into the past, and I discover that nothing else but mercy can account for my being or my well-being. By the grace of God I am what I am. The Psalm of my life, though filled with varied stanzas, has but one chorus—His mercy endures forever. Will you look back, beloved, on all the building of your life and character? Any of it that has been real building—gold, and silver, and precious stones—has all been *mercy*, and so the building will go on! The operation is proceeding slowly but surely. What? Though at this present hour you may be in grievous trouble, mercy is being built up for you. “Oh, no,” you say, “I am tottering, and my days are declining, and I feel I shall be utterly cast down.” Yes, you may be very conscious of your weakness and infirmity, but the mercy of the Lord is steadfast—its foundation abides firm—not a single stone can be moved from its setting! The work is going on, storm or tempest notwithstanding. There is nothing precarious about the fact that mercy shall be built up forever. Let not the murky atmosphere that surrounds you blind your eyes—the eyes of your understanding—to this glorious word, “forever.” Rather say, “If I am well set in this fabric of Mercy, my castings down are often the way in which God builds up His mercy. I shall be built up forever! And oh, if it goes on being built up forever—I am ravished with the thought, though I cannot give expression to it—what will it grow to? What will it grow to?” If it is going to be built up in the case of any one of you, say 70 years, oh it will be a grand pinnacle, an everlasting monument to the Eternal Builder’s praise! But you see it will go on—it will be built up *forever*. What? *Never* cease? No, never! But shall it never come to a pause? No, mercy shall be built up *forever*—it shall go on towering upward. Do you imagine that it will go at a slower rate, by-and-by? That is not likely. It is not God’s way. He generally quickens His speed as He ripens His purposes! So I suspect that He will go on building up His mercy, tier on tier, height on height, *forever*! Says one, “Will its colossal altitude pierce the clouds, and rise above the clear azure of the sky?” It will. Read the text—“Your faithfulness shall You establish in the very heavens”—not in the heavens, only, but in the, “very heavens”—the heaven of heavens! He will build up to that height! He will go on building you up, dear brother, dear sister, till He gets you to heaven. He will build you up till He makes a heavenly man or woman of you, till where Christ is, you shall be—and *what* Christ is, as far as He is man—you shall be! And with God, Himself, you shall be allied—a child of God, an heir of heaven, a joint-heir with Jesus Christ.

I wish I had an imagination, I say again, bold and clear, uncramped by all ideas of the masonry of men, free to expand, and still to cry, “Excelsior.” Palaces, I think, are paltry, and castles and cathedrals are only grand in comparison with the little cots that nestle on the plain. Even mountains, high as the Himalayan range or broad as the Andes, though their peaks are so lofty to our reckoning, are mere specks on the surface of the great globe, itself, and our earth is small among the celestial orbs, a little sister of the larger planets. Figures quite fail me—my description must take another turn. I try and try again to realize the gradual rising of this temple of mercy which shall be built up forever. Within the bounds of my feeble vision, I can discern that it has risen above death, above sin, above fear, above all danger! It has risen above the terrors of the judgment day! It has outsoared the “wreck of matter, and the crash of worlds.” It towers above all our thoughts. Our bliss ascends above an angel’s enjoyments, and he has pleasures that were never checked by a pang, but he does not know the ineffable delight of free grace and dying love! It has ascended above all that I dare to speak of, for even the little I know has about it something that it were not lawful for a man to utter! It is built up into the *very arms of Christ* where His saints shall lie imparadised forever, equal with Himself upon His throne! “I said, Mercy shall be built up forever.” The building-up will go on throughout eternity.

Yes, and what is once built up will never fall down, neither in whole nor in part. *There* is the mercy of it! God is such a Builder that He finishes what He begins, and what He accomplishes is *forever*. “The gifts and calling of God are without repentance.” He does not do and undo, or build for His people after a covenant fashion, and then cast down, again, because the counsel of His heart has changed. So let us sing, and praise, and bless the name of the Lord! I do hope that, from what little our experience has taught us al-

ready, we are prepared to cry, like the psalmist, “I have said, Mercy shall be built up forever: Your faithfulness shall You establish in the very heavens.”

II. Well, now, we come back to the first verse. There are first that shall be last, and last that shall be first, so is it with our text. We have looked at the Eternal Builder, let us now listen to AN EVERLASTING SINGER. “I will sing of the mercies of the Lord forever: with my mouth will I make known Your faithfulness to all generations.”

Here is a good and godly resolution—“I will sing.” The singing of the *heart* is intended, and the singing of the voice is expressed, for he mentions his mouth. And equally true is it that the singing of his pen is implied, since the Psalms that he wrote were for others to sing in generations that should follow.

He says, “I will sing.” I do not know what else he could do. There is God building in mercy. We cannot assist Him in that! We have no mercy to contribute, and what is built is to be *all* of mercy. We cannot impart anything to the great temple which He is building. But we can sit down and sing. It seems delightful that there should be no sound of hammer or noise of axe—that there should be no other sound than the voice of song as when they fabled of the ancient player upon the instruments that he built temples by the force of song! So shall God build up His church, and so shall He build us as living stones into the sacred structure, and so shall we sit and muse on His mercy till the music breaks from our tongue, and we rise to our feet, and stand and sing about it! I will sing of the mercy while the mercy is being built up. “I will sing of the mercies of the Lord.”

But will he not soon sink these sweet notes and relapse into silence? No. He says, “I will sing of the mercies of the Lord *forever*.” Will he not grow weary, and wish for some other occupation? No, for true praise is a thirsty thing, and when it drinks from a golden chalice it soon empties it, and yearns for deeper draughts with strong desire. It could drink up Jordan at a draught! This singing praise to God is a spiritual *passion*. The saved soul delights itself in the Lord, and sings on and on and on unwearily. “I will sing forever,” he says. Not, “I will get others to perform, and then I will retire from the service,” but rather, “I will, myself, sing. My own tongue shall take the solo, whoever may refuse to join in the chorus. I will sing, and with my mouth will I make known Your faithfulness.” Oh, that is blessed—that singing personally and individually! It is a blessed thing to be one of a choir in the praise of God, and we like to have others with us in this happy employment. Still, for all that, the 103rd Psalm is a most beautiful solo. It begins, “Bless the Lord, O my soul,” and it finishes up with, “Bless the Lord, O my soul.” There must be personal, singular praise, for we have received personal and singular mercies! I will sing, I will sing, I will sing of the mercies of the Lord forever!

Now note his subject. “I will sing of the mercies of the Lord.” What, not of anything else? Are the mercies of the Lord his exclusive theme? “Arma virumque cano”—“Arms and the man, I sing,” says the Latin poet. “Mercies and my God, I sing,” says the Hebrew Seer. “I will sing of mercies,” says the devout Christian. This is the fountain of mercy where, if a man drinks, he will sing far better than he that drinks of the Castalian fountain, and on Parnassus begins to tune His harp—

*“Praise the mount, oh, fix me on it,
Mount of God’s unchanging love.”*

Here we are taught a melodious sonnet, “sung by flaming tongues above.” “I will sing of mercies, I will sing of mercies forever,” he says, and I suppose the reason is because God’s mercies would be built up forever. The morning stars sang together when God’s work of creation was completed. Suppose God created a world every day? Surely the morning stars would sing every day. Ah, but God gives us a world of mercies every day, and therefore let us sing of His mercies forever! Any one day that you live, my brothers and sisters, there is enough mercy packed away into it to make you sing not only through that day but through the rest of your life! I have thought, sometimes, when I have received great mercies of God, that I almost wanted to pull up, and to “rest and be thankful,” and say to Him, “My blessed Lord, do not send me any more for a little while. I really must take stock of these. Come, my good secretaries, take down notes and keep a register of all His mercies.” Let us gratefully respond for the manifold gifts we have received, and send back our heartiest praise to God who is the giver of every good thing. But, dear me! Before I could put the basketfuls away on the shelf, there came wagons loaded with more mercy! What was one to do, then, but to sit on the top of the pile, and sing for joy of heart? Then let us lift each parcel, and look at each label, and lay them up in the house, and say, “Is it not full of mercy? As for me, I will go and sit, like

David, before the Lord, and say, ‘Who am I, O Lord God? And what is *my* house, that You have brought me up to now? And is this the manner of man, O Lord God?’” I will sing of the mercies of the Lord forever because I shall never have finished with them! It is true, as Addison puts it—

*“Eternity is too short
To utter all Your praise.”*

You will never accomplish the simple task of acknowledgments because there will be constantly more mercies coming! You will always be in arrears! In heaven itself you will never have praised God sufficiently. You will need to begin heaven over, again, and have another eternity, if such a thing could be, to praise Him for the fresh benefits that He bestows. “For I have said, Mercy shall be built up forever: therefore will I sing of the mercies of the Lord forever.”

What a spectacle it will be as you sit in heaven and watch God building up His mercies forever, or, if it may be, to wander over all the worlds that God has made, for I suppose we may do that, and yet still have heaven for our home. Heaven is everywhere to the heart that lives in God. What a wonderful sight it will be to see God going on building up His mercy. Ah, we have not acquired an idea of the grandeur of the plan of mercy. No thought can conceive, no words can paint the grandeur of His justice. Ah, my dear brothers and sisters, although there have been expressions and metaphors used about the wrath to come which cannot be found in Scripture, and are not to be justified, yet I am persuaded that there is no exaggeration possible of the inviolability of God’s law, of the truthfulness of His threats, of the terror of His indignation, or of the holiness of Jehovah—a holiness that shall constrain universal homage, but you must always take care that you balance all your thoughts. In the retributions of His wrath, there shall be a revelation of His righteousness, for no sentence of His majesty will ever cast a shadow over His mercy, and every enemy will be speechless before the equity of His award! They that hate Him shall hide their faces from Him—in burning shame they shall depart to perpetual banishment from His presence. Their condemnation will not dim the purity of His attributes. The glory of the redeemed will also reveal the righteousness of Jehovah, and His saints will be perfectly satisfied when they are conformed to His likeness. On the summit of the eternal hill you shall sit down and survey that mercy-city, now in course of construction, built up! It lies four square. Its height is the same as its breadth, ever towering, ever widening, ever coming to that divine completion which, nevertheless, it has, in another sense, already attained. We know that God in His mercy shall be all in all. “I will sing of the mercy of the Lord forever,” for I shall see His mercy built up forever.

This singing of Ethan was intended to be instructive. How large a class did he want to teach? He intended to make known God’s mercy to all generations. Dear, dear—if a man teaches one generation, is not that enough? Modern thought does not adventure beyond the tithe of a century, and it gets tame and tasteless before half that tiny span of sensationalism has given it time to evaporate. But the echoes of the truths of God are not so transient—they endure, and by means of the printing press, we can teach generation after generation, leaving books behind us as this good man has bequeathed this Psalm—which is teaching us, tonight, perhaps, more largely than it taught any generation nearer to him. Will you transmit blessed testimonies to your children’s children? It should be your desire to do something in the present life that will live after you are gone. It is one proof to us of our immortality that we instinctively long for a sort of immortality here. Let us strive to get it, not by carving our names on some stone, or writing our epitaphs upon a pillar as Absalom did when he had nothing else by which to commemorate himself, but get to work to do something which shall be a testimony to the mercy of God so that others shall see when we are gone. Ethan said, “God’s mercy shall be built up forever,” and he is teaching us still that blessed fact. Suppose you cannot write, and your influence is very narrow, yet you shall go on singing of God’s praise forever, and you shall go on teaching generations yet to come. You Sunday school teachers, you shall be Sunday school teachers forever. “Oh,” you say, “no, I cannot expect that.” Well, but you shall. You know it will always be Sunday when you get to heaven. There will never be any other day, there—one everlasting Sabbath—and through you, and by you, shall be made known to angels, and principalities, and powers the manifold wisdom of God! I teach some of you now, and I often think you could better teach me, some of you old experienced saints. You will teach me, by-and-by. When we are in glory, we shall, all of us, be able to tell one another something of God’s mercy. Your view of it, you know, differs from mine, and mine from my brother’s. You, my dear friend, see mercy from one point, and your wife, even though she is

one with you, sees it from another point, and detects another sparkle of it which your eyes have never caught. So shall we barter and exchange our knowledge in heaven, and trade together and grow richer in our knowledge of God! “I have said, Mercy shall be built up forever: Your faithfulness shall You establish in the very heavens.” Then I said, “I will sing of the mercies of the Lord forever: with my mouth will I make known Your faithfulness to all generations.”

We will go on exulting in God’s mercy as long as we have any being, and that shall be forever and ever! When we have been in heaven millions of years, we shall not need any other subject to speak of but the mercy of our blessed God, and we shall find auditors with charmed ears to sit and listen to the matchless tale, and some that will ask us to tell it yet again! They will come to heaven, you know, as long as the world lasts, some out of every generation. We shall see them streaming in at the gates more numerous, I hope, as the years roll by, till the Lord comes. And we will continue to tell to fresh corners what the Lord has done for us. We can never stop! We can never cease! But as the heavens are telling the glory of God, and every star declares in wondrous diversity His praise, so where the stars differ from one another in the glory of God above, the saints shall be forever telling the story which shall remain untold—the love we knew, but which surpassed our knowledge—the grace of which we drank, but yet was deeper than our draughts! We will be telling of the bounty in which we swam until we seemed to lose ourselves in love—the favor which was still greater than our utmost conceptions, and rose above our most eager desires. God bless you, brothers and sisters, and send you away singing—

*“All that remains for me
Is but to love and sing,
And wait until the angels come,
To bear me to my King!”*

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